



HEPATITIS A VIRUS

Hepatitis A Information Specific for Tsunami Survivors

What is hepatitis A?

Hepatitis A is a liver disease caused by hepatitis A virus.

How do you get infected with hepatitis A virus?

The virus is spread from person to person by putting something in your mouth that has been contaminated with the stool of a person with hepatitis A. This can happen when you drink water or eat food that has been contaminated with the stool of a person infected with the virus. For this reason, the virus is more easily spread in areas where there are poor sanitary conditions or where good personal hygiene is not observed.

What are the signs and symptoms of hepatitis A?

Not every one has signs or symptoms when infected with the virus. Older persons are more likely to have symptoms than children. If symptoms are present, they usually occur abruptly and might include fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark urine, and jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes). Symptoms usually last less than 2 months; a few persons are ill for as long as 6 months. The average incubation period for hepatitis A is 28 days (range: 15–50 days).

How do you know if you have hepatitis A?

A blood test (IgM anti-HAV) is needed to diagnose hepatitis A. Talk to a healthcare professional if you think you might have been exposed to hepatitis A virus.

How can you prevent hepatitis A?

You should wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom, before you eat and after you change a diaper. Be sure to drink water from an approved drinking source and cook or thoroughly wash your food before eating.

Two products are used to prevent hepatitis A virus infection: immune globulin and hepatitis A vaccine. Immune globulin offers immediate protection from infection, but only lasts about 3 months. Hepatitis A vaccine takes at least 2 weeks to work, but protection lasts for at least 20 years. Check with your healthcare professional to find out if either of these products is good for you.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/, or call the CDC public response hotline at (888) 246-2675 (English), (888) 246-2857 (español), or (866) 874-2646 (TTY).